



****EMBARGOED TUESDAY 18 DECEMBER 2007 AT 00:01****

Crofters in North East Highlands support more regulation

Crofters in the North East Highlands are keen to increase regulation on a number of crofting-related issues, according to Committee of Inquiry on Crofting has published the results today (Tuesday 18 December).

The Survey of Rural Development and Crofting, which was commissioned by the Inquiry to help formulate its vision for the future of crofting, was conducted in crofting communities across Scotland and interviewed people on a range of crofting-related issues.

Regulation was a key part of the survey and all respondents were asked to state if they felt that there should be more or less regulation on crofting and crofting activities. In general, 46% of total respondents supported less regulation, while only 18% felt there should be more regulation. In addition, 30% feel it should be less strict, while 26% think it should remain the same.

Respondents were then asked to rate 11 crofting-related issues requiring more or less regulation and support for more regulation around residency (absenteeism) was greatest in the North East Highlands. In addition, people in the North East expressed stronger support for regulation around limits on the size of crofts.

The issues that all respondents feel require more regulation include residency (absenteeism), sales of crofts and pricing of crofts.

While the survey revealed significant regional variations on certain issues, there were certain aspects that all crofting communities have the same opinion. For example, 96% of respondents identified young crofters as the most important aspect of a thriving crofting community and highlighted children not taking on family crofts as one of the biggest threats to crofting's future.

Encouraging young people to enter crofting was highlighted as the highest ranked issue requiring increased funding, with 72% of respondents ranking this area. The survey also shows a clear concern over affordability of housing with 88% disagreeing that housing is affordable in their area for young people.

Professor Shucksmith added: "From the outset we have aimed to ensure the Inquiry listened to the views of a wide variety of people and organisations. The survey was developed to gather the views of more people living in crofting communities and to learn about the significance of crofting to these people.

“We were particularly keen to gather the views of non-crofters and were surprised to find that there is very little distinction between the perspectives of crofters and non-crofters, suggesting that issues and challenges are similar within specific communities, even though there are differences between areas. The regional variations will have to be taken into consideration when developing our recommendations.

“Over 2,000 people have now contributed to this current debate and it is clear there are a number of key issues that concern people living in crofting communities in Scotland. These issues will be priority areas for the Inquiry to address and ensure we develop a vision which meets the needs of all of Scotland’s crofting communities.”

The Survey of Rural Development and Crofting is available to view and download on the Inquiry’s website at www.croftinginquiry.org from 00.01hrs on Tuesday 18 December.

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Notes to editors:

- The Survey of Rural Development and Crofting was undertaken using a door-to-door, interviewer administered questionnaire. A total of 1,047 interviews were conducted, of which 587 were crofters.
- The research explores areas of concern among crofters and non-crofters in current and potential crofting communities across Scotland. It examines its significance for sustainable rural development and the economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of that development.
- The Committee of Inquiry on Crofting was set up to identify a vision for the future of crofting, particularly in relation to sustaining and enhancing the population; improving economic vitality; safeguarding landscape and biodiversity and sustaining cultural diversity.
- The Committee will share its recommendations with crofting communities and others with an interest in rural Scotland early next year. Details of this further engagement have to be finalised, but is likely to involve a series of public meetings. The final report will be presented to Scottish Ministers in spring 2008.
- Journalists may obtain an advance copy of the survey findings, subject to the embargo, from the contacts below.

Issued by Barkers on behalf of the Committee of Inquiry on Crofting

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